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Viewpoints on Current Problems

New Conditions of the Ideological Struggle of Communists and Catholics

ORLANDO MILLAS

WORLD MARXIST REVIEW has examined in previous articles the problems arising from the changes that have taken place in the thinking of Catholic circles under the impact of the social struggle. These articles, and particularly the article by Santiago Alvarez, "Towards an Alliance of Communists and Catholics", summed up the experience making possible joint actions by Communists and Catholics, and the participation of the latter in democratic movements. This subject is of exceptional interest, especially for countries like Chile where the Christian-Democrats are in office. The attitude of the Catholic masses, of their organisations and leaders, is of great importance for advancing the unity of the forces fighting for peace, the independence of nations and against the aggressive policy of U.S. imperialism and the omnipotence of the monopolies.

"Aggiornamento"

Last December the Second Vatican Council ended its deliberations. Pope Paul VI declared in this connection that one could not speak of the Council having "reformed" or "transformed" the Church, but one could say that it had "renovated" it. Press commentators use the Italian word "aggiornamento", meaning "modernisation", to describe this new development.

A change in the attitude among the clergy is evident also in Chile. It can be said that in certain respects the Church is departing from its traditional positions. Some of our views regarding the Church are, therefore, no longer valid and need to be modified.

Unlike religion, Marxism-Leninism does not require "aggiornamento", for its very essence is constant critical reflection, examination of reality and rapidly cognising the new. Let us, therefore, frankly, carefully and dialectically examine the problem of Catholic "renovation".

The Real World—the Basis of the Changes

The act of convening the Ecumenical Council signified a departure from the dogmatic extremes associated with the personal dictatorship of the Pope. After the First Vatican Council in 1870 affirmed the infallibility of the Pope, it was announced that there would no longer be any need for such meetings. Pius XII based his absolutism on the principle: "The Church, I am the Church". Numerous articles published at the time in the Vatican repeated the sacramental phrase: "The living directives of Pius XII are the direct and universal norms of the faith." During his office bishops were reduced to mere vicars of the Pope. The Council, on the contrary, is a collective authority, and its recent meeting accented the need for partial decentralisation which would create the prerequisites for semi-autonomous initiative by the dioceses.

The authoritative Catholic commentator Rene Laurentin in his *The Dispute about the Council*, which appeared shortly after John

XXIII's initiative, wrote: "The difficulty is that Jesus Christ did not institute the Councils. Neither he nor the Apostles established any explicit norms. It is an improvised institution, connected with unforeseen historical circumstances. . . . Usually Councils are summoned at times of crises, abnormal situations, when serious danger threatens the Church."

"Crisis", "abnormal situations when serious danger threatens the Church". What lies behind these words?

We are living in the times of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Marx wrote in *Capital* that the religious world is a reflex of the real world. This real world is changing rapidly, and with it its religious reflex.

Marx explains that "for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour—for such a society, Christianity with its cultus of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion," and that "the religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature".

The process of adequately reflecting society is extremely complex and difficult. In our times too the protest against "real misery" is expressed in the shape of "religious misery", "the sigh of the oppressed creature", "criticism of the vale of tears, the halo of which is religion", disillusionment which leads to critical reflection and revolutionary action—all these feelings are closely interwoven in the hearts and minds of millions of people.

The Standpoint of the Communists

We know of innumerable cases of deeply religious people taking an active part in the struggle headed by the Communists, even though this participation meant for them the personal tragedy of excommunication. We know of many families where the mothers or grandmothers who, although devout Catholics, helped their Communist sons and grandsons in the struggle during the periods of repression. They would return heartbroken from the Sunday Mass at which the priest had anathematised Communism as being "evil from its very birth".

We explained to these families that at the beginning of the last century Pius VII had intimidated fighters for the independence of Chile by invoking the wrath of the Lord, and that Leo XII in one of his encyclicals had denounced the founders of our republic as miscreants. Now when celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the republic the archbishops and cardinals praise the Lord for the

victory which not so long ago they had cursed. And on Independence Day, September 18, 1965, during the thanksgiving service in the Cathedral of Santiago, the priest, enumerating the most illustrious figures in the national history, mentioned the name of Luis Emilio Recabarren, the founder of the Communist Party of Chile.

Anti-communism isolated the Church, erected a wall of distrust around it which blocked its access to the hearts of people. In many villages the peasants regarded the visiting monks as the direct accomplices of the landlords. In the mining villages the presence of priests was considered a bad omen. In the past decade the number of people dedicating themselves to religion has sharply decreased. Congregations too are becoming smaller; parish priests in poor areas have told us that their rejection of anti-communism has made their work easier, had given them new possibilities for regaining the confidence of the people.

The attitude of the Communist Party of Chile to religion has always been consistently Marxist. True, there was a time, shortly after the Party was founded in 1912 (as the Socialist Workers' Party), when it was influenced by the anti-clericalism of a section of the bourgeoisie and by the anarchists, when it sent lecturers to working-class centres who satirised religious practices. Even Comrade Elias Lafertte, who subsequently became chairman of the Party, was tried in his youth as editor of the satirical newspaper *El Bonete* which lampooned the Church. However, before long these methods were replaced by persistent ideological work which far from weakening stimulated joint action by all working people against reaction.

In the 19th century the progressive attitude of the liberal elements of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie was identified with anti-clericalism. During the latter part of the century when the radicals became the standard-bearers of the progressive movement the secular trend gained ground, due primarily to the freemasons who opposed the Catholic Church. Later a series of anti-clerical demands were granted (the right to have secular cemeteries, civil registration, civil marriages, freedom of religious rites, compulsory elementary education), and in 1925 the Constitution was amended to provide for separation of the Church from the State. However, as workers gathered from their own experience, the amended Constitution did not put an end to the regime of exploitation. They continued the struggle on a different plane, at the same time carrying forward the correctly understood anti-clerical traditions. In our times these traditions are reflected in the movement to extend the network of state educational institutions with a scientific approach to instruction, in opposition to interference by the Church in politics, in the fight against religious intolerance.

In his article "Emigrant Literature" Engels ridiculed the programme of the Blanquists which stated that: "There is no room for priests in the Commune, every religious manifestation, every religious organisation must be prohibited". He wrote in this connection: "This much is sure: the only service that can be rendered to God today is to declare atheism a compulsory article of faith and to outdo Bismarck's *Kirchenkulturkampf* by prohibiting religion in general. . . ." In his *Anti-Dühring*, he expressed himself in a similar vein: "Herr Dühring, however, cannot wait until religion dies this, its natural, death. He proceeds in more deep-rooted fashion. He out-Bismarcks Bismarck; he decrees sharper May laws not merely against catholicism, but against all religion whatsoever; he incites his gendarmes of the future against religion and thereby helps it to martyrdom and a prolonged lease of life. Wherever we turn, we find specifically Prussian socialism."

This denunciation of the anti-religious twaddle had as its purpose to organise the working class, to raise its ideological level in the course of the social struggle and thus help develop the mass consciousness away from religious illusions. *The determining factor must be the actual progress of the class struggle*, the guiding principle—concrete conditions, without "transforming what is a shifting and relative boundary into an absolute boundary" (Lenin).

In Latin America reactionaries have always exploited the religious differences in the working class. This has always been an obstacle to developing mass movements. In this connection it should be noted that in view of the growing role of women in society, to identify their religious sentiment with counter-revolutionary positions can only keep them away from the common struggle. Communists are now using all possibilities to promote unity of the working class and the people and to foil attempts to divide them.

The Beginnings of a Process

We fully appreciate the importance of the new policy of the Catholics. Although some people believe that, apart from certain outward change, everything has remained the same, while others regard "aggiornamento" simply as a skilful, calculated move, we on the contrary see the world in constant movement. We know that the class struggle is the decisive factor revolutionising institutions and ideas. We are fully aware of the profound effect that the structural changes and the trend towards socialism are having on the superstructure in general, and on the religious outlook in particular. And we were not surprised by the convening of the Council which was summoned to register the irremediable agony of values formerly exalted by the Church, and the triumph of all that it had combated.

If religion were to die suddenly, without leaving any traces in the minds of people, things would be simple and a requiem would be enough. However, for a substantial part of humanity it is a question of a real drama of the conscience, often a question of personal tragedy with the most unforeseen moral consequences affecting many aspects of everyday life. The process will continue for a long time, ultimately merging with the struggle for national and social liberation.

The Instability of Religious Norms

One of the theologists who participated in the Second Vatican Council, the Jesuit, Karl Rahner, in an article published in *Stimmen der Zeit* testified that "some Catholics welcome the Council and its work with enthusiasm since it represents the beginning so long awaited and which very nearly came too late".

The old Catholic thesis: *Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis* ("the world changes, but the Holy Cross remains") has lost its pull. This thesis never corresponded to historical reality. But even the elementary concepts of religious thinking which were used to prevent the masses from being drawn up into the revolutionary movement, are now losing their former effectiveness.

Finding themselves compelled to combat the danger of the collapse of the fundamental doctrines of Catholicism, ecclesiastical commentators had to differentiate between immutable Divine right and Ecclesiastical right which are undergoing modifications, depending on the zigzags of historical development. To avoid more serious difficulties they have warned: "Doubts might arise about some particular law being ordained by God, and hence immutable".

Great indeed is the effect on the faithful of the doubts about the religious canons, and also of the Church's recognition that a large

part of its commandments, laws, proscriptions, prohibitions and grants of absolution are determined by circumstances and not in any way by "revelations".

The Democratisation in the Church

For nearly two thousand years the dominant tendency in Catholicism was submission to an external, superior will. It was the religion preached by emperors, slaveowners, feudal lords, capitalists, imperialists. But alongside this there was another powerful, though subordinate and submerged, tendency, that of "love thy neighbour", found chiefly among the masses of the exploited. Marxism has always stressed the difference between these two tendencies. The centuries-old contradictions in Catholicism, which stem from such factors as the spirit of solidarity and the spirit of antagonism inherent in this religion, are now developing on a new plane and are no longer determined by purely internal impulses but by the changes taking place in the world.

The most notable change registered by the Second Vatican Council is a certain democratisation in the Church, which makes it possible for the faithful to exert a greater influence.

This democratisation is manifested in the changing of the Church, for centuries patterned as an absolute monarchy, into "the children of God", in a reassessment of the role of believers who, while continuing to be subordinate to the decisions of the Bishops, will meet at national episcopal conference possessing a certain degree of autonomy. Clearly this will enable many leaders of Catholic organisations influenced by modern trends to adopt a more progressive standpoint. The signs are that the ideological struggle in the Church far from relenting, will gain in intensity.

The rejection of gloomy rituals, of unintelligible symbolism expressed in Latin and their replacement by ceremonies, prayers and sermons in the respective national language, signify more than just rapprochement with the masses. The new is invading the domain of theology. For example, believers now have access to religious books, and Scripture is becoming the object of different interpretations. As we know, because of its ambiguity the Bible was interpreted differently in time of tense class struggle by the contending classes which sought in it justification for their views. The Papal tyranny, established by the First Vatican Council, bequeathed to the Pontiff the monopoly right to interpret religious texts. Nowadays this "monopoly" is beginning to lose its practical value to some extent.

One has only to listen to the sermons of some of our priests to realise that there are two antagonistic trends of thought also in the church in Chile, and that the influence of the traditionalists is steadily waning.

In his article "Religion and Development", published in the journal *Mensaje*, the Chilean Jesuit, Mario Zañartu, admitted that Catholicism in Latin America, justifying the existence of the social order by the will of God, condemned the desire for more or less radical changes, sought to concentrate the thoughts of the masses "in the hereafter in order that they should scorn life in the present", preached resignation to misery, fatalism, and so on. In the same article the new, counterpoised to the traditional Catholic way of thinking, includes "a favourable attitude to change", advocates "an interest in this life", "action to arrive at a more perfect earthly existence and improve its structure", the conviction that "the

omnipotence of the Almighty by no means implies rejection of individual responsibility or a lessening of efforts to change things", "the need to do one's best", "love thy brother, which signifies all people and is aimed at achieving universal good", and "profound respect for all forms of human activity".

The Crisis of the "Social Doctrine" of the Church

The policy of "aggiornamento", continued by the Second Vatican Council despite numerous deviations and vacillations, has been necessitated by the disintegration of the so-called "social doctrine" of the Church, the reactionary tenets of which have been disproved by experience. This doctrine was first expounded in 1891 by Leo XIII in his encyclical "Rerum Novarum" and amplified in 1931 by Pius XI in his encyclical "quadragesimo Anno", and by Pius XII in his radio message of Pentecost in June 1941. These documents are wholly in the spirit of "Quanta Cura" (1864) and other Vatican acts which condemn both liberalism and socialism, refer to the secular State as being impious and absurd, and declare war on freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, not to mention science.

According to the "social doctrine" of the Church "it is unthinkable that all people in civil society should rise to the same level". "It is man's lot to suffer and endure. No matter how hard man tries, no matter what efforts he exerts, he will not be able completely to remove these inconveniences from the life of humanity." As for the Socialists "all their efforts against Nature are in vain". "All power derives from God and is a manifestation of the works of God." "Private property should not be burdened with excessive taxes, for not from the laws of men but from nature comes the right to private property; consequently, the public authority cannot abolish this right it can only moderate its realisation and combine it with the common good. Thus, it is unjust and inhuman to exact from the property of individuals in the guise of taxes more than is equitable." ("Rerum Novarum"). "Grave harm is caused by those who propagate the principle that the value of labour is equivalent to the fruits of its production, that the remuneration of labour should be equal to this value, and that the working man, therefore, has the right to demand everything that is the product of his labour." ("Quadragesimo Anno.")

The idea that exploitation of man by man, that capitalism, the appropriation by the capitalists of surplus value, anti-labour repressions and inequality are all "works of God", opposition to which is a mortal sin, was spread in the most extreme forms.

For a long time the Church used its influence on behalf of the masters and against the workers. It is true, some Catholic circles, the forerunners of the present Christian-Democratic Party, advocated those sections in the "social" encyclicals which condemned capitalist abuses. They did not adhere to the viewpoint of the reactionaries, and they had the support of some priests and bishops. But, as we know, it takes more than a few swallows to convince us of the arrival of summer.

In Chile the Church for a whole century identified itself with the most reactionary political party in the country, the Conservative Party, headed by the landlord oligarchy responsible for the massacres and crimes perpetrated in the country. Incidentally, the party emblem was the crucifix.

Playing on primitive prejudice and superstition, parish priests in the villages and in the districts of the poor would ascribe satanic

qualities to Communists.

Nothing, however, could prevent the rise of the working-class movement and a mass Communist Party. The Church realised that its policy was not getting it anywhere. A similar process was under way in other countries of Latin America and of the world. The crisis manifested itself in diverse forms and particularly in a widespread movement inside the Church for renovation.

Possibilities for Joint Action

If we proceed not from abstract moral categories, but from the actual requirements of the social struggle, we can speak of two trends in modern Catholicism—of a theology that seeks to divert the attention of the working people from the problems of the day, and a theology which does not prevent believers from joining the stream of revolutionary action.

In Chile growing numbers of young Catholics identify the very vague and ambiguous concept "communitarian system", regarded as the Christian ideal, with Socialism and Communism. The Christian-Democrat deputy, Julio Silva Solar, in a book on this thesis upholds "ideological pluralism", by which is implied competition and even the possible co-operation of Marxists, Catholics and people of other ideological trends in building socialism and communism, understood as a social system in which there is no private ownership of the means of production. Similar views are shared by many deputies and also by most of the leaders of the youth organisations of the Christian-Democratic Party.

The Communists, who are striving for unity of all working people, do not reject this pluralism. In Chile the People's Front was in power for ten years. Towards the end this democratic coalition government included representatives of our Party. Communists have been, and still are, the majority in some municipal councils. And Catholics can confirm that never once have we used our influence to the detriment of their religious feelings. Lack of mutual understanding was due to the militant anti-communism of many Popes who unscrupulously used their religion for reactionary political aims. After the publication of "Rerum Novarum", practically every Vatican document (irrespective of its subject) contained sharp attacks against the working-class movement and especially against the Communists. When fascism was on the upsurge, Pius XII heaped curses on "materialist and atheist communism".

John XXIII's "Mater at Magistra", written in much more fraternal and humane tones, marked a significant change in the style of the Pope; it heralded, in a way, a return to that image of Christianity which was brought into being by movements of the exploited, movements which in the past had been religious in character and had usually been considered heretical.

But the most important new feature introduced by the encyclical was its approval of socialisation, understood as "the progressive multiplication of relations in society, with different forms of life and activity and juridical institutionalisation". John XXIII emphatically refuted the fears of his predecessors in the following words: "Ought it to be concluded, then, that socialisation, growing in extent and depth, necessarily reduces men to automatons? It is a question which must be answered in the negative." As for the social struggle in the epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism, John XXIII expressed his sympathy for it or, at any rate, recognition of its historical necessity. "Socialisation", he said, "is not to be considered as a product of natural forces working in a deterministic way. It is, on the contrary, as we have observed, a

creation of men, being conscious, free and intended by nature to work in a responsible way, even if in their so acting they are obliged to recognise and respect the laws of economic development and social progress and cannot escape from all the pressures of their environment."

In "Pacem in terris" John XXIII amplified these tenets. In this encyclical he departed from anti-communism and unequivocally recognised the need for joint action based on understanding and respect for the historical mass movements not connected with Christianity.

New Campaign to Recruit Followers

Undoubtedly a considerable part of the hierarchy understand "aggiornamento" to mean the adoption of more modern and flexible methods and shedding, so to speak, all that is redundant, with a view to creating new possibilities for gaining followers. In the case of these groups it is a question of making up for time lost and of achieving by different means their old aims of ousting the Communists, neutralising the mass movement and blunting its militant character.

The Catholic propaganda apparatus has been reorganised accordingly. A veritable army of sociologists is now at work. With practically unlimited resources at their disposal, they are making the fullest use of the advances in industry and sociology, in the system of "human relations", publicity and education.

The International Catholic Centre of Social Research in Brussels with its ramified network of branches is the principal co-ordinating centre of this activity for Latin America.

An enumeration of all the organisations engaged in clerical activity would take up too much space. Among the more important are those grouped according to ideological trends of international importance as, for example Opus Dei, also called the Sacred Society of the Holy Cross and the Works of the Lord. A reactionary integralist organisation, it has a membership of nearly 100,000 organised in 200 secret lodges in different parts of the world. Its rival organisation is the "Left" Economy and Humanism, headed by the Dominican, Lebreu, who also heads several research centres, and around whom are grouped a large number of reformist priests and leaders of Christian-Democratic parties.

Mention should also be made of Columbianum (Genoa), a Jesuit organisation for neo-colonialist contacts between Europe, on the one hand, and Africa, Asia and Latin America, on the other. The European-Latin American Centre is one of the branches of this organisation.

Thus, a variety of trends are represented—from the "Right" Opus Dei, to the "Centrist" Columbianum and the "Left" Economy and Humanism.

We are witnessing an intensive Catholic campaign to recruit new followers, a campaign which is being conducted much more effectively than in previous years, and directly among the masses.

The "marginal" theory advanced by Christian sociologists recognises the tendency on the part of all individuals to join the social struggle, but notes at the same time that considerable sections of the population have not been able to achieve this either in the countryside or in urban working-class areas where women in particular play hardly any part in public life; the same is true, they add, of different social categories who have no access to culture. The Christian leaders of the new type pay special attention to these "marginal" sections which include people who have recently joined the ranks of the working class, farm labourers, men employed in

small workshops and the members of their families not engaged in production, and the petty-bourgeoisie. They appoint "leaders" from among these sections, form organisations for them, act as their spokesmen and channel their activity into reformism and certain forms of class collaboration. They call this policy "popular advancement".

Imperialist Influence

What is the attitude of U.S. imperialism to the new clerical policy?

In his interesting article, "The Ideological Offensive of Catholicism in Latin America: the Social Sciences" published last year in the Uruguay journal *Estudios*, Manuel Facal noted that one of the decisive factors contributing to the proliferation of new Catholic organisations is the financial support given by U.S. and West European foundations, mostly non-clerical.

Although the Gregorian University in Rome indisputably remains the *alma mater* of this tendency, after the Alliance for Progress was launched and, in general, beginning with the first steps of President Kennedy's Administration, the United States became the second centre. The Belgian Jesuit Roger Vekemans, the "grey eminence" of the Christian-Democrat government of Chile, welcomed the Alliance for Progress with the same enthusiasm as his European fellow-priests had welcomed the Marshall Plan. Vekemans has established in Santiago the Centre for the Economic and Social Development of Latin America, which has links with the Organisation of American States. This Centre collaborates with the Loyola University in New Orleans.

The relations between imperialism and the modern clerical trends are not those of unconditional subordination of the latter to the former; they are more in the nature of reciprocal relations. The Latin American Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (regional organisation of the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions), distinctly differs from the Inter-American Regional Organisation of Labour (ORIT), although both oppose unity and independence of the trade unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions. Having failed to split the working class, the Latin American Confederation of Trade Unions set up its own organisation, the Chilean Trade Union Movement (ASICH) which trains union officials and operates inside the unions. The Christian-Democratic Latin-American Federation of Peasants and Farm Labourers has, on the contrary, been able to establish parallel organisations, which in the struggle for agrarian reform are beginning to carry out joint actions with the Federation of Peasants and Indians, an affiliate of the Trade Union Centre of Working People.

The ultra-reactionaries in the Pentagon and the State Department who consider violence and military dictatorships to be the lot of Latin America do not believe in the effectiveness of the actions of the clericals and, as a rule, view their reformism with hostility. It is symptomatic, however, that a paper like *El Mercurio* (Santiago), mouthpiece of the U.S. Embassy and known for its sympathies for the "gorillas", should at the same time support the Catholic groups in power. In the crusade against communism both God and the Devil will do!

U.S. imperialism has rendered very substantial aid to the Chilean Church in its campaign to win new followers. It has supplied the Church, through the American Catholic charity organisation, with food, medicaments, clothing and money. The Chilean Cardinal, Raul Silva Henriquez, heads the charity organisation *Caritas Internacional*.

Quite a few Catholic organisations are financed from U.S. sources. One of the factors facilitating this is that the Vatican and religious orders invest their capital in those U.S. monopolies operating in Chile and in Latin America generally, which announced in advance their readiness to give part of their profits to aid the clerical institutions.

Some Catholics go Further . . .

The religious world, in the throes of a crisis, is rent by many contradictions. However, the theological changes, far from mitigating these contradictions, are exacerbating them. The result is a deep-going moral conflict attended by many misgivings and far-reaching aspirations. Many Catholics, including priests, go much farther than the stand proposed by their colleagues who are anxious to adapt Catholicism to the condition of the last phase of capitalism in order to maintain contact with the masses, and to retain their influence, at any price, on the historical process. The well-known and instructive example of the worker priests, many of whom have become imbued with the spirit of class consciousness, is now being repeated on a wider scale. Imperialism's investments in some of the clerical organisations might well lead to results it least expected.

There was a time when the broad-minded approach of the Jesuits to the new social reality of our times seemed astonishing. In Chile the Jesuit college San Ignacio educated several generations of Christian-Democrats, the first to join progressive movements. But the Jesuits soon systematised their aims in the framework of reformism which Roger Vekemans hitched to the Alliance for Progress, thus revealing its feebleness.

The reformism of the Jesuits is limited. It assiduously avoids anything that might injure the U.S. monopolies. And yet the Jesuits have had to release the deluge, held in check so long and whose course they cannot block.

Although a neo-colonialist trend was apparent at the Second Vatican Council, with Paul VI as its main spokesman, the voices of other prelates were heard during the deliberations, among them Heider Camara of Brazil and Tchidimo of Guinea, who went further. And it is not a question of individual dignitaries. Constant contacts with Catholics in the trade unions, in residential areas and in the mass movements show that a large number of them want to break with capitalism. The same is true also of many priests. The men of this trend sincerely believe that the democratisation of their churches would be a truly Christian undertaking. They see the meaning of their religion in love of their fellow men, in implicit faith in man. To these Catholics their faith is no obstacle to being revolutionaries; on the contrary, it helps them in the struggle. An example of this was the life and heroic death of the Colombian priest and revolutionary, Camilo Torres.

Unity of the Working Class and the Entire People

We Communists are glad to be working side by side with Catholics in the mass movement. We are all for unity of the working class and the entire people, for a united trade union in every branch of industry, a united centre of the working people, a united organisation of the residents of a particular settlement or area, a united centre of the mothers in a community, for organisational unity of all mass movements without exception. There will be place in them for Marxists and Catholics, for Protestants and other groups, for Communists and Socialists, Radicals and Christian-Democrats, National-Democrats and for people of no party.

The common denominator is basic class interests. Experience shows the need for united front action and rallying the masses of town and country. At the dawn of the working-class movement in Chile the revolutionary trend, headed by Luis Emilio Recabarren, had to contend with anarchists and the "Josefinos", as the Catholic workers were called at the time, since the Church maintained that Saint Joseph was the patron saint of their union centres. In the beginning the trade union centres functioned on a regional scale and were known as workers' communities. Subsequently, on the initiative of the railwaymen the Workers' Federation was formed, the first national union in the country. It was headed by the Conservative Marin Pinuer. Owing to the fact that the unions in the industrial communities did not at first join the Federation initial membership consisted mainly of "Josefinos". During the First World War the Federation was joined by contingents of the working class with long traditions of militancy. Luis Emilio Recabarren became its general secretary. Ten years later official trade unions were formed with the object of undermining the unity of the working people. These unions enjoyed the support of the authorities and also certain privileges. The Communist attitude was that all workers should join these unions, with the result that the revolutionary trend soon predominated in them.

After the Second World War the U.S. imperialists succeeded in splitting the trade union centre, then known as the Confederation of the Working People of Chile. Undaunted by the split, the Communists still fought for the unity of all unions. They insisted that the minority supporting a split in the unions that had remained loyal to the old Confederation should have the same rights as those supporting unity in the unions that had been split. Before long, the Centre itself, under pressure of the lower organisations, urged healing the split, with the result that the Trade Union Centre of the Working People of Chile came into being.

Respect for the creeds and political views of the members, public discussions at meetings, proportional representation of the respective groups in the leading bodies, reaching agreement with the groups concerned on basic resolutions, using every opportunity to arrive at unanimous decisions (in keeping with the rule of the subordination of the minority to the majority)—all this, far from weakening the struggle, favours its development and hampers the manoeuvres of the class enemies and the intrigues of their agents.

Practice has shown that the Catholic workers do not always adopt reformist positions or show insufficient class firmness. Ideological convictions do not necessarily correspond to exact and automatically defined views on the development of the class struggle. Even if Catholic workers are members of a group led by Catholic Action, or of a political party which acts as spokesman of their religious principles, this in itself should not prevent most of these workers from supporting the Communists for purely class reasons. But this requires a correct approach not only to the revolutionary perspective and to politics in general, but also to the minor problems and concrete issues worrying the working people and their families. In other words, it demands that all organisations of the Communist Party master the art of being a heedful, thoughtful vanguard.

A Creative Dialogue

Joint action by Communists and Catholics does not mean renunciation of the ideological struggle; but it means shifting it to new ground. It is not a question of Communists changing their principles for the sake of mutual understanding with the Catholics, or of the Catholics ceasing to be Catholics. A dialogue does not mean striking a bargain: its purpose is to clarify the positions of the parties concerned in the interests of mutual understanding. A dialogue presupposes a readiness on the part of both sides to seek the truth and, first and foremost, to find an area for concerted efforts to achieve common aims.

All their lives millions of Catholics believed the anti-communist slanders. We attach importance to the opportunities to explain our way of thinking, our aims and our methods. This will enable us finally to lay the ghost of the notorious devil said to be embodied in the Communists. We, for our part, will also finish with certain prejudices and oversimplified notions, for we are vitally interested in correctly understanding reality.

For us Communists the dialogue is of greater importance than it is for anybody else precisely because of the character of our doctrine, the boundless faith we have in critical reflection and critical action, our scientific approach to the world and hence our confidence that the world is moving in the direction predicted by us.

The changes in the Catholic Church are a result of the changes taking place in life, changes for which we Communists hold ourselves responsible with understandable and justified pride. We can but welcome these changes. They do not, and cannot of course, resolve our differences regarding the celestial world, but they considerably approximate our views regarding the temporal world. Although we proceed from different premises and use different methods, these changes make it possible for us jointly to concentrate on the issue of human happiness which can be won only in struggle against backwardness, exploitation, want and ignorance.

Our times imperatively demand that the ideological dispute be conducted in a way that makes for mutual understanding. Any departure from our standpoint, even the slightest, can but play into the hands of imperialism which hides behind anti-scientific concepts of all kinds. Still, if the ideological struggle is to be effective it must be conducted in a convincing way and must be linked with the fight for peace, bread, liberty, prosperity and culture. The Communist style of ideological struggle facilitates joint action by all sections of the working people, cements the anti-imperialist forces.

Among the questions worrying forward-looking Catholics is the question whether different parties, holding different religious views, and particularly Marxist-Leninist and Catholic parties, will be able to exist in our countries under socialism. We believe that Catholics—both laity and their representatives—as they come in direct contact with the noble undertaking of socialist and communist construction will themselves join this process, enjoying the new rights stemming from their new position. The question posed therefore applies to them rather than to us. We welcome all their actions aimed at freeing themselves from fetters, obvious and disguised, with the help of which imperialism has tried and is still trying to hold them back.

At the end of last year a Chilean Parliamentary delegation visited the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Catholic senators and deputies made some very positive statements. They no longer doubt that socialism is a viable force and a very promising reality. This is a sign of the times. But even more so is the fact that millions of Catholics in town and country are gaining a new understanding of socialism and of Communists.